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**Registers of Letters Received and
Letters Received by Headquarters,
Department of New Mexico
1854-1865**



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1821-1920

Record Group 393

REGISTERS OF LETTERS RECEIVED AND
LETTERS RECEIVED BY HEADQUARTERS
DEPARTMENT OF NEW MEXICO
1854-1865

On the 30 rolls of this microfilm publication are reproduced the registers of letters received and the letters received by Headquarters, Department of New Mexico, January 1854-September 1865. These records are part of Records of U.S. Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Record Group (RG) 393, in the custody of the National Archives and Records Service (NARS).

History

On October 31, 1853, War Department General Order 25 directed that the 9th Military Department be divided among several newly created departments. Most of the area embraced by the older command became the Department of New Mexico, consisting of "the Territory of New Mexico, except the country West of the 110th degree of West Longitude; Head Quarters at Albuquerque, New Mexico." On January 1, 1854, the 9th Military Department formally ceased to exist, and the Department of New Mexico came into being.

The Department functioned as an organizational unit until the end of the Civil War, with a single exception: from July to October 1861, it was part of the short-lived Western Department. This brief attempt at consolidation apparently had little practical effect in New Mexico, as indicated by the records of the Department, which show no evidence of implementation. After the Civil War, the War Department reorganized its command structure. War Department General Order 118, dated June 27, 1865, placed the Territory of New Mexico within the jurisdiction of the Department of California. On that same date, Department of California General Order 1 designated the Territory as the District of New Mexico. The Department of New Mexico, however, continued to function until September 1, 1865.

Carrying on the mission of the preceding command, the Department of New Mexico functioned as a buffer between Indians and settlers and as a force for implementing U.S. Government Indian policies. The Army served as both arbitrator and police in conflicts involving already established U.S. citizens, newly arriving settlers, Indians, and the Mexican population. As pioneers moved into the Territory, the Army frequently provided aid for impoverished travelers and victims of Indian and outlaw attacks. In addition to carrying out scouts, explorations, and military expeditions, troops frequently provided escort service for mail and provision trains.

During the Civil War, the Regular Army and Volunteer troops of the Department of New Mexico bore the responsibility of protecting the Territory from Confederate invasion. In November 1861, Confederate military forces operating from Texas attempted to seize the Territory. Union and Confederate troops clashed in the Battles of Glorietta Pass and Apache Canyon, March 26-28, 1862, and in a rear guard action at Paralta, April 15, 1862. These battles eliminated the Confederate threat.

Records Description

Registers of Letters Received

In accordance with recordkeeping practices of the time, registers of letters received were maintained as a permanent record of the receipt and disposition of incoming communications. They also served as finding aids to the letters themselves, which were arranged and numbered to correspond to the entries in the registers. Upon receipt, each letter was entered in a register. Each entry includes a file designation, the name or office of the writer, the date and place of origin of the letter, a summary ("purport") of its contents, the number of enclosures, and usually some indication of its ultimate disposition, such as "filed" or "forwarded." Some entries also include cross-references to related letters, endorsements, or orders.

The six volumes of registers of letters received reproduced in this publication cover, in chronological sequence, the period January 1854-September 1865. The entries in each volume are arranged alphabetically and thereunder arranged and numbered chronologically by year. A few entries appear out of chronological sequence, and occasionally items are entered in the register without a number. Letters written in one year but received at the beginning of the following year are sometimes assigned a number in the sequence of the year in which they were written. The number of pages assigned to each alphabetical division in the register sometimes proved insufficient, necessitating the continuation of entries elsewhere in the volume. The NARS staff, however, has filmed the entries in their proper order; as a result, page numbers sometimes appear out of sequence.

Not all letters entered in the registers are found among the main series of letters received by the Department of New Mexico. An asterisk beside an entry number indicates that the corresponding letter is among the letters received. In a few instances, a letter is missing, but the enclosures to the letter are present. These entry numbers are also marked with an asterisk. Occasionally, too, a registered letter has been filed as an enclosure to another registered letter. In such

cases, the original entry in the register is marked with an asterisk. If the entry has not been annotated by War Department clerks to show the new location of the letter, the information was added in brackets by the NARS staff.

Some entries bear marginal notations reading "filed with leaves of absence" or "filed with restoration to duty." These notations refer to two small groups of letters that were at one time removed from the main series of letters received and filed separately. The NARS staff has returned these letters to their original file positions among the main series of letters received; the marginal comments, therefore, are now irrelevant.

Letters Received

The letters received, 1854-65, are arranged by year, thereunder alphabetically by initial letter of surname or office of correspondent, and thereunder chronologically by date received. Letters received bear file designations consisting of a letter of the alphabet and a number. Beginning in 1861, the file designation often includes the year of receipt. File designations on letters received after 1863 may also include the page number of the register on which the letter was entered. Other notations include the following: name and rank of the correspondent; place of origin, date, and summary ("purport") of the letter; name or office of the addressee; date and place of receipt; number of enclosures; cross-references to related correspondence; and endorsements.

Occasionally, letters received at department headquarters were not entered in registers. These unregistered letters, especially numerous for the Civil War period, are similar in nature and content to those that are registered. The unregistered letters are arranged chronologically and have been filmed on rolls 28-30 of this publication.

The letters reproduced in this publication were received from the War Department, other geographical commands, subordinate units, and staff officers. Letters from other officers, enlisted men, private citizens, Territorial and U.S. Government officials, and Mexican officials are also included.

These letters document the mission of the Department of New Mexico to protect the lives and property of the citizens of the United States and to enforce the laws of its Government. Many of the letters relate to military operations against Indians. There are accounts of Indian attacks on soldiers, settlers, and immigrant wagon trains and of thefts of both civilian and military livestock. Officers, including Kit Carson, report armed expeditions and scouting activities, primarily against the Navaho and Apache, but also against the

Eutaw (Ute), Kiowa, and Commanche. Reports of scouting expeditions contain detailed accounts of the flora, land, water, and climate of the area and have as enclosures sketches and water colors done by Army personnel.

In addition to these more significant events, the letters also describe the day-to-day concerns of a frontier military command. They report on camp and post conditions, and on such chronic problems as illness, disease, and shortages of food, clothing, ammunition, and other supplies.

The letters of the Civil War years document the increase in military authority and its encroachment on civil jurisdiction, as well as the 1861-62 Confederate invasion. Some letters reflect the cooperation of the Mexican Government in forwarding information about the strength and location of Texas troops. Other reports document highly inflated prices for food and supplies purchased by the Army and severe shortages of other necessities.

Related Records

In RG 393 are related series of records of the Department of New Mexico; its predecessor, the 9th Military Department (1848-53); and its successor, the District of New Mexico (1865-90). These records are available on microfilm as follows: *Letters Sent by the 9th Military Department, the Department of New Mexico and the District of New Mexico, 1849-1890*, M1072; *Register of Letters Received and Letters Received by Headquarters, 9th Military Department, 1848-1853*, M1102; *Letters Received by Headquarters, District of New Mexico, September 1865-August 1890*, M1088; and *Registers of Letters Received by Headquarters, District of New Mexico, September 1865-August 1890*, M1097.

Roslyn R. Wright wrote the introductory remarks and prepared the records for filming.

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